

## **THE USDA ISO GUIDE 65 PROGRAM**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The USDA ISO Guide 65 Program provides the means for a large number of businesses, such as farms or processors, to receive certification of conformance to an industry created or adopted standard from a certifying agent accredited by the GIPSA Verification Services Program (GVSP). Certified businesses realize a savings under this program because they are audited and approved directly by the certifying agent rather than by GVSP. The certifying agent incurs the cost for GSVP accreditation (approval). The certified businesses benefit directly, however, by linking their certification to the USDA accredited agent. Their names and product information will be posted on the GIPSA website in conjunction with the certifying agent's information. An identification logo created by the certifying agent for use by the certified business also may reference USDA accreditation.

An applicant for accreditation must meet the requirements of ISO Guide 65 – General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems. Certified operations must meet the requirements of the industry adopted standard as verified by the certifying agent and its inspectors. Inspectors who do desk audits and onsite inspections for the certifying agent must meet the agent's criteria for education, experience and training. Minimum qualifications are stated below in section 5 e).

The USDA Guide 65 Program operates under the requirements of FGIS Directive 9180.79. Exceptions and additional requirements follow in Section 5. The USDA Guide 65 Program is a voluntary conformity assessment program provided to certification bodies in the grain, oilseed, or pulse industries and associated agribusinesses.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

#### **2.1 Accreditation Body.**

GVSP is the accreditation body and third-party auditing service that verifies a certifying agent's ability to meet the requirements of ISO Guide 65 and ensures that the agent's customers meet the requirements of an approved standard. GVSP must meet the requirements of ISO 10017, *Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*.

#### **2.2 Certifying Agent or Conformity Assessment Body.**

The organization that provides third-party auditing services to businesses and ensures that they meet a designated standard, such as an industry created or adopted standard. In this APPENDIX, a certifying agent must meet the requirements of ISO Guide 65 - *The General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*, prior to receiving accreditation from GVSP.

### **2.3 Certified Operation.**

The organization that meets the requirements of an approved standard based on a third-party audit from an accredited certifying agent.

### **2.4 Approved Standard.**

An approved standard must include:

- a. Nationally accepted standards or standards used by marketing sectors in other countries, or
- b. Industry developed and adopted standard that meets a specific need and has been accepted by GVSP as a credible method of describing a quality management or quality assurance system.

## **3. APPLICABILITY**

The USDA Guide 65 Program is a voluntary conformity assessment and accreditation program provided to certification bodies in the grain, oilseed, or pulse industries and associated agribusinesses. Applicants for accreditation may already be in operation, providing certification to a recognized standard, or they may be a new company using a newly approved standard.

## **4. REFERENCES**

- a. ISO Guide 65 - *The General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*.
- b. USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Audit Review and Compliance Branch Procedure 1012.
- c. GVSP procedures and forms for Committee Meetings and Recommendations

## **5. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, EXCEPTIONS, ADDITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO DIRECTIVE 9180.79**

### **5.1 Requirements.**

- a. Certifying agents must meet all requirements of ISO Guide 65 “*The General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*”.

- b. Certification is limited to 1 year. Certifying agents must conduct annual certification reviews including an on-site inspection.

## **5.2 Exceptions.**

- a. FGIS Directive 9180.79, Sections 6, 7, and 9, describe an auditing and approval process in which an adequacy audit (sometimes referred to as a desk audit) is performed to ensure that the applicant organization is capable of conforming to program requirements. The adequacy audit is followed by an on-site audit to assess the way in which the applicant has implemented its documented program. After passing the on-site audit, approval is either granted or denied. This procedure does not change for certifying agents already in existence performing conformity assessment audits to an existing standard.

Under the USDA Guide 65 Program, applicants that are a new certifying agent are accredited (approved) based upon the adequacy audit. Once accredited, they may begin certifying applicants. Certification documents must be sent to GVSP for review. An on-site audit will be conducted after the applicant has performed several certifications and has an opportunity to establish a track record for review.

- b. FGIS Directive 9180.79, Section 9 mentions that the names of approved operations are listed on the GVSP page of the GIPSA website. Under the USDA Guide 65 Program, the name and contact information of accredited certifying agents will be listed on the GVSP webpage, including the names of the operations certified by each agent.

## **5.3 Additions.**

- a. ISO Guide 65 requires the certifying agent to provide a certificate of conformance to a certified operation. In addition to the items stated in Guide 65, a certifying agent may place other pertinent information on the certificate including the following or a similar statement: “[Name of the Certifier] is accredited under ISO Guide 65 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.” Certificate formats are approved during the adequacy audit.

Certifying agents also may use the statement in company brochures, advertisements, and official documents, provided remarks or references are complete and not misleading. Such use must be approved by GVSP prior to publication.

- b. ISO Guide 65 allows certifying agents to use its logo or another symbol of identification on certified products or in advertising and promotional material. The logo or symbol must be appropriate for the certifying agent and may not mimic the USDA logo; however, it may be accompanied by the statement “Accredited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture”, or by a similar statement. The certifying agent’s logo must be approved prior to accreditation.
- c. Inspectors hired by accredited certifying agents must meet the certifying agent’s requirements for education, experience, and training. The basic qualifications must include at least:
  - (1) Educational levels sufficient to ensure the reading, writing and mathematical skills necessary to interpret the standard, write reports, and determine fees and other charges by the certifying agent.
  - (2) Experience working in the agricultural sector being audited to ensure an accurate evaluation based on the standard being used.
  - (3) Attendance at a training session or sessions that cover the standard to which the inspector will be auditing, the audit protocol required in ISO Guide 65, and the certifying agent’s auditing, reporting, and billing requirements. Training may be provided directly by the certifying agent.

#### **5.4 Clarification.**

FGIS Directive 9180.79 at section 19 addresses appeals, complaints and disputes from applicants for accreditation or accredited certifying agents directed toward GVSP regarding pending accreditation or accreditation matters.

Section 7 in ISO Guide 65 addresses appeals, complaints, and disputes from applicants for certification or certified operations directed toward the certifying agent regarding pending certification or certification matters.

John C. Giler, Acting Director  
Field Management Division